



STATE OF INDIANA

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News Release

For immediate release

Public Access Counselor provides new services

INDIANAPOLIS (May 16, 2008) – Public Access Counselor Heather Willis Neal today announces her office is providing improved services for customers. The Public Access Counselor has published the 2008 update of the *Handbook on Public Access Laws*. The *Handbook* was originally published several years ago as a tool for public officials as well as members of the public at large and the media. It was last updated in December 2003. Today's updated 54-page *Handbook* contains statutory changes and commentary up to and including the most recent session of the Indiana General Assembly. The *Handbook* is available for downloading and printing via the office website at www.IN.gov/pac.

In addition, Neal announces that the Indiana Office of Technology has created a new and improved website for the Public Access Counselor's office. The website features the new *Handbook* as well as other tools to help users quickly search opinions and find helpful resources with answers to their public access questions. The office has also added a new guide to help citizens decide whether and how to file a formal complaint with the office when they believe their rights have been violated.

Neal was appointed as Public Access Counselor by Governor Daniels on July 1, 2007. The Public Access Counselor's office serves as a resource for members of the public, the media, and public officials. The two-person office answers thousands of telephone calls and email questions each year. In addition, the counselor issues more than three hundred legal opinions per year concerning complaints or questions related to public access laws.

"It is important that private citizens and public officials alike have quick access to answers to their questions about public access laws," Neal said. "I am pleased to provide updated tools and resources, like our 2008 *Handbook*, so public official and citizens have all the information they need at their fingertips."